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ABSTRACT

The handbook for parents of children in the mentally gifted minor program of Oceanside, California, explains the district plan, selection of students, classroom activities, and the parent role. Also noted are program purposes, program organization, instructional materials, special interests of pupils, special activities parents can provide, organizations concerned with the gifted, and a bibliography. (DB)

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OCEANSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Oceanside, California

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A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

This handbook is provided to help you, the parent, understand the philosophy and purpose of the Oceanside Unified School District Mentally Gifted Minor Program. It will give an explanation of the district plan, selection of students, the classroom activities and your role for aiding your child.

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The Oceanside Unified School District will meet the individual needs of gifted students. The goals of the program are:

1. To identify at every level and in every school those students who are gifted.

2. To understand the abilities and needs of each gifted student.

3. To provide the educational program which will enable each gifted student to develop his abilities to the fullest potential.

4. To provide a learning environment which permits the mastery of concepts, content, and skills prescribed by Course of Study as rapidly as each student can do so and concurrently provide opportunity for each to pursue his work in depth and breadth.

The learner objectives include:

1. Mastery of subject matter.
2. Development of physical and emotional maturity.
3. Development of communication skills.
4. Mastery of methods for research and problem solving.
5. Development of leadership responsibilities.
6. Development of desirable attitudes.
7. Cultivation of social skills.
8. Recognition of creativity and concern for humanity.
9. Development of special talents.

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The district offers a multitude of ways for providing instructional time for the student. The provisions for instruction within the self-contained classroom are:

Individual enrichment - supplementary learning activities which augment the regular educational program.

Cluster group - students of like-ability or like-interest are placed in a classroom for interaction of ideas and use of special materials.

Part-time placement in advanced grades - students are placed in an advanced class to participate in a subject area of a higher level.

High School - Junior College - 12th grade students may enroll at MiraCosta College transfer classes. The student can receive credit at either school.

The provisions for part-time special instruction during the school day include:

Enrichment Center - provides the student with a learning environment in a laboratory situation conducive to exploration and utilization of individual abilities.

Honor Classes - the classes provide in-depth study, accelerated study and enrichment of subjects. Utilized at the high school level.

Independent Study - a student is allowed to pursue a special interest under the direction of special teacher advisor.

Resource Teacher - Small groups of students meet with a traveling teacher for a period of time each week to develop teacher request of research and pursue interests.

Part-time Departmentalization - The classes focus on academic subject areas and supplementary activities which extend classroom activities.

The provisions for instruction of the students through part-time special instruction outside the school day include special classes or events scheduled on Saturdays, before and after school.

Other opportunities include special day classes, elementary summer school for the giftea and summer honors program for the high school student.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PROGRAM

The materials purchased for the program vary from chemicals, instructional models, to special textbooks and research volumes. The materials are purchased to meet a specific need or objectives within a student's program or group of students' program.

Ability is the actual power or skill to perform and achieve.

Acceleration is the rapid advancement with
or the covering of a grade level's material in a minimum amount of time.

Curriculum is the total of the in-class and outside activities of the school program.

Enrichment is the broadening of the basic knowledge of a subject area of the curriculum.

Exceptional children is a term used to denote those children who deviate from what is supposed to be average to such an extent that they require special educational services in order to develop to their maximum capacity.

Gifted is the term used to denote those individuals with rapid learning ability usually in the top 2-6 percent of intellectual capacity.

Talent is both the capacity and ability in a special field, functioning to a high degree.

MATERIALS DEFINITIONS CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The criteria for selection of students are threefold -- teacher recommendation, test results, and a survey of the ability and intellectual characteristics of the child.

The teachers' notes, referrals, records and comments in relation to the student's qualities aid in determining those to be selected. The ability to generalize, create and make critical judgments are qualitative and quantitative things that a teacher notes.

The results of testing are used to direct the attention of the admissions committee to the student's potential. The tests have limits and for that reason the final selection of students is not based upon test scores only.

The schools, as one of the most encompassing agencies of our society, have responsibility to identify early and to encourage continuation of education.

The differences in these students is not in kind but in quality. Terman and Oden warn "to compel a gifted child to go through school at the usual rate for the average child is fraught with danger."

Gifted students are first of all human beings and have the same traits as others. Some traits that distinguish them are:

1. Quick understanding
2. Insatiable curiosity
3. Retentive memory
4. Unusual vocabulary at an early age
5. Extensive information
6. Enthusiasm
7. Creativity
8. Long attention span
9. Ingenuity
10. Demand for independence
11. Group leadership

The flexibility of the curriculum is important because of the wide interests of the students. Flexibility allows the teacher or teachers the opportunity to assist the students in following their interests. It does not put limits on what is covered but offers new corridors to explore in the curricular framework.

The classes are small to enable the teachers to adequately meet the needs of the students.

The student intellectual growth needs stimulation by activities and experiences which motivate him to search for deeper understanding and for truth. Students soon discover whether it is better to work to their capacity or hold back because this would only result in greater quantity of work rather than greater quality.

A special Developmental Case Study envelope is maintained for each identified gifted student. It contains forms and supplementary data as accumulated for each student. The envelope is held in the school during the school year and returned to the Instructional Resource Center at the close of each school year or whenever the student leaves the school district.

SPECIAL INTERESTS OF PUPILS

REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTRICT

Parents living with gifted children need to realize their child is gifted and has the potential to academically achieve.

Equally important, parents are reminded that while their child is bright, he is still a child. He has the normal needs of love, security, mutual interests and trust. His differences from the average child are quantitative and qualitative rather than physical and emotional.

Berating becomes a tendency when more is expected and demanded of a child than the child can emotionally accept or produce. Berating his achievement can cause a loss of faith in his ability or a lack of confidence. Parents need to expect the best, but not lose sight of the child's emotional, social or educational maturity.

When other children are in the home, care is needed not to over-emphasize his giftedness. Severe sibling rivalry and maladjustments can be caused when one child is allowed special privileges. Parents are responsible for developing and maintaining the emotional stability of all children in the family.

Willard Abraham said children are tough. Parents, genuinely interested in them, need not berate themselves for not being all things to their child.

Parents can provide a wide variety of activities for their child at home to promote interest in the world around them. They can become involved in hobbies of mutual interest to both the child and parent. Such hobbies as collecting stamps, rocks, shells, leaves, flowers, building models, working with crafts, gardening, listening to the radio or watching television. A child-centered activity or a parent-developed one can stimulate better home relationships and a more interested child.

Conversation times are important to children. It helps them develop the ability to communicate. They need to practice social poise in many situations. It gives them the self-confidence and acceptance necessary to live in a many-sided "average" world.

Parents help their child become aware of the community and its resources by encouraging participation in groups such as Scouts, worshipping at the church of their choice and planned trips to local points of interest to help acquaint him with local cultural heritage and resources. Forced attendance without interest discourages rather than encourages the child. He is not fooled by manufactured enthusiasm.

Parents can stimulate their child's mental and social growth through genuine interest and respect of his talents. The willingness to take time to discuss and listen are the best activities parents can offer.

Parents can gain insight into the child's potential through conferences with the teacher, psychologists and principal. The conference should touch upon the emotional, educational, physical and social growth being experienced by the child. General conferences or meetings can be held to discuss the purpose and practices of the class groups and district program.

Study groups of interested parents can be formed to discuss questions as they arise. It is important that an able, informed and interested leader chair the meetings or serve as a resource person.

Some of the organizations already set up are:

The American Association for Gifted Children, Inc.
The Association for Childhood Education
The National Association for Gifted Children
The California Association for the Gifted

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* These materials are available for your use by contacting Mrs. Jane Koch, Senior Library Clerk, Instructional Resource Center - Phone: 757-2560, Ext. 264